

# Rules of the Game

## Making Magic Items (Part Four)

*By Skip Williams*



Thus far, we've examined scroll, potion, wand, and staff creation. All these items are essentially spell storage devices, which makes figuring out their costs fairly straightforward. Many items, such as those we'll examine this week, have powers that spells don't duplicate (or don't duplicate very well), and creating those takes some extra effort on the parts of players and DMs because pricing them can prove more difficult to determine than prices for spell storage items.

Still, duplicating items that already are described in the rules isn't terribly daunting.

### Creating Weapons, Armor, and Shields

Any of these items can prove fairly easy to create, particularly when an **enhancement bonus** is the only magical property the item has. Some items of this kind have a wide array of powers; fortunately, most of these extra powers merely increase the item's effective enhancement bonus, which makes them fairly easy to handle.

**Prerequisites:** To make a magic weapon, armor, or shield, you need the Craft Magic Arms and Armor item creation feat. (The feat itself has a caster level of 5th as a prerequisite.) The creator also must have a caster level at least three times the enhancement bonus of the weapon, armor, or shield. If the item has a special ability that is priced as an enhancement bonus increase (see the section on costs), that ability has its own caster level requirement (as shown in the description for the special ability), and the creator must meet the higher of the two caster level prerequisites. For example, to create a *+2 longsword*, a character must have a caster level of at least 6th. The keen weapon property has a caster level of 10th. To create a *+2 keen longsword*, a character must have a caster level of at least 10th, which is the higher of the two prerequisites. This item would be priced as a *+3* magic weapon, but the caster level prerequisite is still 10th, not 9th (as it would be if the weapon's actual enhancement bonus was *+3*).

If any spells are listed among the item's prerequisites (or among the prerequisites for any special properties it has), you need to have those spells prepared each day you work on the item (or you must know the spells, in the case of a bard or sorcerer). Each day you work on the items, the prerequisite spells are used up, just as they are for a scroll.

**Caster Level:** A weapon, suit of armor, or a shield that has only an enhancement bonus has a caster level equal to three times the enhancement bonus. A special ability for a weapon, suit of armor, or a shield has a caster level given in its description. A weapon, suit of armor, or a shield with a special ability must have an enhancement bonus of at least *+1* to have a special ability, and the item uses the highest caster level.

These caster levels are fixed -- the creator cannot adjust them as he can for a scroll, potion, wand or staff.

**Equipment and Materials:** To make a magic weapon, suit of armor, or shield, you need a set of tools suitable for working the material from which the item is made, such as metalworking tools for a magic longsword. You

also need a masterwork item to receive the magic, a fire source, and a collection of oddments similar to materials used to create wands. The rules don't specify the kind of fire source, but a small brazier, campfire, fireplace, or furnace should suffice. The cost for the fire is subsumed in the basic cost for materials, as is the cost of the sundry other materials you need.

**Cost:** The base cost for the item's enhancement bonus is shown on Table 7-2 or 7-9 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The base cost for any special abilities of the item is shown in the descriptions for those abilities. Some items have costs expressed in gold pieces, and such costs are added directly to the base cost for the item's enhancement. Most weapon, armor, or shield special abilities, however, are expressed as increases to the item's enhancement bonus (more about that in Part Seven). To determine the cost for such a special ability, apply the modifier to the item's actual enhancement bonus and use the cost for the increased bonus from Table 7-2 or 7-9 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. It's possible for one item to have both kinds of special abilities; in that case, add up the actual enhancement bonus and the modifiers to it and determine the base cost for the effective bonus, then add the costs for any special abilities that have costs expressed in gold pieces.

**Creation Cost:** The monetary cost to create a magic weapon, suit of armor, or shield is half the base price, plus the cost of the masterwork item.

The experience cost to create the item is 1/25th the base price.

If the item (or its special properties) has a prerequisite spell that has an extra monetary or XP cost, you generally do not have to pay those costs to make the item. That is because weapons, suits of armor, or shields usually do not produce spells, so you just need to understand a particular set of spells to create the magic that the item requires.

**Market Price:** The market price for a weapon, suit of armor, or shield is the base price, plus the cost of the masterwork item.

**Example Weapon, Armor, and Shield Costs:** A +2 *keen longsword* would have a base price of 18,000 gp and a market price of 18,315 gp calculated as follows:

The actual enhancement bonus is +2 and the keen property adds +1 to that for an effective bonus of +3. A +3 weapon has a base price of 18,000 gp according to Table 7-9 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The cost to create this weapon is half the base price (9,000 gp) plus the cost of a masterwork longsword (315 gp). The experience cost to create the weapon is 1/25th the base price, or 720 XP. The market price is the base price plus the cost of the masterwork longsword (18,000 gp + 315 gp = 18,315 gp).

This weapon would have a caster level of 10th, which is the caster level for the keen property because that is higher than the caster level for the actual enhancement bonus, which is 6th (3 x 2).

A +1 *chain shirt of silent moves* would have a base price of 4,750 gp and a market price of 5,000 gp calculated as follows:

The enhancement bonus is +1 and the silent moves property adds 3,750 gp to the base price. The base price for +1 armor is 1,000 gp according to Table 7-2 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (1,000 gp + 3,750 gp = 4,750 gp). The experience cost to create the armor is 1/25th the base price, or 190 XP. The market price is the base price plus the cost of the masterwork chain shirt (4,750 gp + 250 gp = 5,000 gp).

The caster level for the silent moves property is 5th and the caster level for the actual +1 enhancement is 3rd, so the armor has a caster level of 5th.

A +3 *heavy steel shield of bashing and undead controlling* would have a base price of 65,000 gp and a market price of 65,170 gp calculated as follows:

The enhancement bonus is +3. The bashing property adds +1 to that for an effective bonus of +4. The undead controlling property adds 49,000 gp to the base price.

The base price for +4 armor is 16,000 gp according to Table 7-2 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (16,000 gp + 49,000 gp = 65,000 gp). The experience cost to create the shield is 1/25th the base price, or 2,600 XP. The market price is the base price plus the cost of the masterwork heavy steel shield (65,000 gp + 170 gp = 65,170 gp).

The caster level for the bashing property is 8th, the caster level for the undead controlling property is 13th, and the caster level for the actual +3 enhancement is 9th, so the shield has a caster level of 13th.

**Weapon, Armor, and Shield Miscellany:** No weapon, armor, or shield made with the Craft Magic Arms and Armor feat can have an actual enhancement bonus higher than +5 or an effective enhancement bonus (after adjustments for special abilities) higher than +10. The epic rules allow epic item creators to break these limits. When special properties have prices expressed in gold pieces, there is no limit to the number of those properties you can add, even if you're not playing an epic game. However, the limits on how much experience a character can spend at once (see Part One) set a practical limit on how powerful an item a non-epic character can make.

When a magic weapon, suit of armor, or shield is made from a special material, such as adamantine or mithral, the cost for the special material replaces the masterwork cost for the item because the costs for special materials generally include the cost for a masterwork item (check the special material's description to be sure). For example, a +2 *adamantine keen longsword* would have a base price of 18,000 gp and a market price of 21,015 gp calculated as follows:

The actual enhancement bonus is +2 and the keen property adds +1 to that for an effective bonus of +3. A +3 weapon has a base price of 18,000 gp according to Table 7-9 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The cost to create this weapon is half the base price (9,000 gp) plus the cost of an adamantinelongsword (3,015 gp). The experience cost to create the weapon is 1/25th the base price, or 720 XP. The market price is the base price plus the cost of the adamantine longsword (18,000 gp + 3,015 gp = 21,015 gp).

Cold iron doubles the cost for an item (but not the cost to make it a masterwork item). In addition, cold iron naturally resists magic and is harder to enspell than other materials. Add 2,000 gp to the cost of an item's enhancement bonus and special abilities. According to the **D&D** FAQ, however, you add the 2,000 gp only once if you're adding multiple abilities. For example, a +2 *cold iron keen longsword* would have a base price of 20,000 gp and a market price of 20,330 gp calculated as follows:

The actual enhancement bonus is +2 and the keen property adds +1 to that for an effective bonus of +3. A +3 weapon has a base price of 18,000 gp according to Table 7-9 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, plus 2,000 for working with a cold iron item. The cost to create this weapon is half the base price (9,000 gp) plus the cost of a cold iron longsword (330 gp). The experience cost to create the weapon is 1/25th the base price, or 800 XP. The market price is the base price plus the cost of the cold iron longsword (20,000 gp + 330 gp = 20,330 gp).

When creating a magic weapon, you have the option to have the weapon shed light when drawn. Doing so does not alter the cost to make or buy the weapon. Weapons that shed light do so continually and the light is as bright as a *light* spell (see page 221 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Creating a magic **double weapon** works just like creating two magic weapons, except that you add the cost of a masterwork weapon only once. For example, a dire flail that has +1 enhancement bonus at each end has a base price of 4,000 gp (2,000 gp for +1 enhancement x 2). The monetary cost to create the weapon is 2,000 gp plus 690 gp for a masterwork dire flail. The experience cost to create the weapon is 1/25th of the base cost (160 XP). The market price 4,690 gp (4,000 gp + 690 gp). A crafter can create a magic double weapon with only one magic end.

## What's Next?

So, we've tackled weapons, armor, and shields. Next week, we'll look at what's involved in creating rings.

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## About the Author

**Skip Williams** keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and was the Sage of *Dragon Magazine* for 18 years. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the *Monster Manual*. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (rabbits and deer are not Skip's friends) or works on repairing and improving the century-old farmhouse that he shares with his wife, Penny, and a growing menagerie of pets.

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